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ABSTRACT

Kenneth Burke, in his book "Permanence and Change" (1935) predicted that, as a result of the dehumanizing and alienation of people by technology, the 300-year reign of science that supplanted the age of religion and still prevails today would be replaced by poetic humanism as the new orientation. Current changes within rhetorical theory as a discipline must be identified to determine whether or not contemporary rhetorical theory is moving toward poetic humanism and away from science. A brief comparison of traditional and more recent theorists presented in "Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric" (by S. Foss and others) supports a trend in rhetorical theory away from science and toward poetic humanism. Stephen Toulmin and Chaim Perelman are directly associated with the field of argumentation, and their "rational" approach to rhetoric suggests a close relationship with science since science emphasizes "rationality." Ernesto Grassi's humanism centers on the process of people gaining control over nature. Jurgen Habermas reacts against the supremacy of "scientism" and presents hermeneutics to provide more methodological balance. Michel Foucault claims that discursive formations are central to all knowledge and power in society, thus providing rhetoric a central role in daily activity. The complex and subjective nature of Foucault's archaeological method makes it more consistent with the orientation of poetic humanism than science. The ideas of these contemporary European philosophers can provide a theoretical foundation for a rhetoric of poetic humanism which can be organized according to the humanistic, poetic, subjective, and pluralistic characteristics of poetic humanism. (RS)

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RHETORICAL THEORY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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In his book Permanence and Change, written in 1935, Kenneth Burke describes how individuals and society can create an orientation or a dominant pattern of thought (5-18) and traces the evolution of Western society through the three stages of magic, religion, and science. He explains how each orientation develops weaknesses as appropriate responses to the world and how a new pattern of thought, serving as a corrective, transcends the earlier one to become the new rationalization (Burke's orientation is similar to Thomas Kuhn's paradigm). Burke then predicts that as a result of the dehumanizing and alienation of people by technology the 300-year reign of science will be replaced by poetic humanism as the new orientation. In a previous paper I have suggested that implementing poetic humanism is the challenge of the 21st century.

This program is an attempt to explore the natures of rhetoric, communication, language, and ethics in such an orientation. This paper will start with Burke's explanation of poetic humanism and outline potential elements of such an orientation to determine whether or not rhetoric is moving toward poetic humanism. Then, concepts from contemporary European theorists will be presented that foreshadow the characteristics of a rhetoric of poetic humanism.

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Poetic Humanism

Burke points out that the corrective to the scientific rationalization must be toward "the anthropomorphic or humanistic or poetic" because science has emphasized dominance instead of inducement. He suggests that "a poetic emphasis as against the specifically religious one" is desirable because poetry has never been institutionalized as religion has been in the church (65). Burke adds "the devices of poetry are close to the spontaneous genius of man . . . ." He then concludes that the new orientation would be a "rationale of art . . . an art of living" (66). In the Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion, "humanism" is contrasted with "absolutism" and "theism." It suggests a system in which "human values and appreciations" are central (235).

Burke has already contrasted science and poetic humanism, but it would be useful to carry this comparison further and identify components that will ultimately be used as the basis for understanding the rhetorical characteristics of poetic humanism. Specific philosophies of science may differ, but it consistently is associated with reality as the appearance of things (Dictionary) and "knowledge covering general truths or the operation of general laws . . ." (Webster's). Three specific patterns of thought are associated with science--objectivity, rationality, and absoluteness. In contrast, humanism concentrates on "human values and appreciations" and can be characterized as subjective, poetic, and pluralistic. For this discussion, four characteristics--humanistic, poetic, subjective, and pluralistic--will serve as the basis for initiating a rhetoric of poetic humanism.

Trend in Rhetorical Theory

To determine whether or not contemporary rhetorical theory is moving toward poetic humanism and away from science one must identify current changes within rhetorical theory. This will be explored by examining Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric by Foss, Foss, and Trapp, which provides an overview of contemporary rhetorical theory. The authors suggest that contributions from eight contemporary thinkers capture the essence of rhetorical theory. They also indicate that Stephen Toulmin, Chaim Perelman, and Richard Weaver take an "argumentative" approach to rhetoric and Ernesto Grassi, Michel Foucault, and Jurgen Habermas are the most recent contributors to rhetorical theory (vii). So for the purpose of discovering a trend, the more traditional theorists will be contrasted with the more recent contributors for the degree to which their ideas are consistent with the philosophies of either science or poetic humanism.

Of the three "argumentative" theorists, Toulmin and Perelman are directly associated with the field of argumentation, and their "rational" approach to rhetoric suggests a close relationship with science since science emphasizes "rationality." However, within this context, both men move away from a close tie to the scientific orientation by rejecting deduction and embracing induction (90, 123) as the most appropriate pattern of thought for rhetoric. Assessing Richard Weaver's association with science is more difficult. On one hand, he embraces "rationality" with his emphasis upon the process of dialectic as a means of arriving at ultimate truth (63). Additionally, he has a high priority for deduction in the form of argument from genus or definition (67) and a low priority for induction and the argument from circumstance (69). On the other hand, Weaver focuses on

language (63) and the human being (59) rather than on an external reality. Weaver may not be easy to classify, but he does not fall comfortably into the scientific orientation. According to my reading of Foss, Foss, and Trapp these theorists come closest to embracing the scientific perspective.

Ernesto Grassi, Jurgen Habermas, and Michel Foucault, the most recent theorists, will be examined in greater detail later, but now we need to consider their consistency with the science and poetic humanism. Grassi is presented as an Italian Humanist "in direct opposition to the modern, scientific tradition" (Foss 147), which suggests clearly rejects science and comes closer to accepting poetic humanism as an orientation. For Habermas, a variety of sources from Marxism to critical theory as well as hermenutics, positivism, Freudian psychoanalysis, and philosophy of language have influenced his almost paradoxical approach to communication. He presents a model for "rationality" of communication at every level of society, but he also acknowledges the impediments that distort communication and preclude achieving "rationality" (252). Habermas, then, appears to stand somewhere between the orientations of science and poetic humanism. Michel Foucault clearly separates himself from the scientific orientation. He indicates that the episteme or "structure governing knowledge in a culture" for the 17th and 18th centuries--the principle of "representation" which characterizes science--is no longer appropriate today, and that Modernity is concerned with "the analysis of meaning and signification" (221). Foucault's philosophy is definitely more compatible with poetic humanism than science.

This brief comparison of the traditional and more recent theorists presented in Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric supports a trend in rhetorical theory away from science as an orientation toward poetic

humanism. Foss, Foss, and Trapp provide additional support for this trend when they develop three challenges to the dominance of the Western rhetorical tradition from feminist, Afrocentric, and Asian perspectives.

Rhetoric of Poetic Humanism

Now, the major concepts presented by Grassi, Habermas, and Foucault can be examined to gain some insight into the nature of a rhetoric of poetic humanism. Grassi's humanism centers on the process of people gaining control over nature, which "involves the transfer of meaning from the sensory world to a higher human one" (Foss 151). The term Grassi gives for this human creative activity is "ingenium" which means "grasping." He makes it clear that "grasping" is not deduction because it necessarily precedes it: "We can draw conclusions only from what we have already grasped" (Grassi 45). Extending ingenium, Grassi presents three ways in which it develops the human world--imagination, work, and language (Foss 152). These activities are important, but for our purposes the rhetorical concept central to the operation of ingenium and its manifestations is more important. Grassi, in arguing for the centrality of metaphor to language, indicates that:

> . . . "metaphor" lies at the base of human cognition and how this view stands in complete opposition to both purely formal theories of language and abstract theories that deduce the meaning of language in rationalistic terms from a priori doctrine of being. We must understand the humanistic view of the primacy of metaphorical thought and language in just this way, that it has the characteristics of being "archaic," "original," "inventive," and "imagistic." (Grassi 98-9)

Grassi, in identifying metaphor as the most important concept in language, ties it to humanism as well as discussing it in poetic terms. For Grassi, ingenium and metaphor would be essential concepts in a rhetoric of poetic humanism.

I have already indicated that a variety of influences shaped Habermas' approach toward rhetoric. In Communication and the Evolution of Society, he reacts against the the supremacy of "scientism" and presents hermeneutics to provide more methodological balance. In the translator's introduction Thomas McCarthy stresses Habermas' concern for symbolic structures:

> Habermas argues that access to a symbolically structured object domain calls for procedures that are logically distinct from those developed in the natural sciences, procedures designed to grasp the "meaning" that is constitutive of social reality. Social action depends on the agent's "definition of the situation," and this is not solely a matter of subjective motivations. The meanings to which social action is oriented are primarily intersubjective meanings constitutive of the sociocultural matrix in which individuals find themselves and act: inherited value and world views, institutionalized roles and social norms, and so on. (xi)

Habermas also indicates that explanations and hypotheses deal less with "causality of nature" than with "the symbolic means of the mind" operating through life history (xiii).

From this starting point, Habermas presents a model of human knowledge in which work, language, and power govern all human activity. The human condition forces people to work to meet their basic needs; they also are required to and want to interact with others in social groups; and

these interactions create group power relations. Habermas then indicates that these domains should be fully interacting with each other and should be equally valued (Foss, 252-55).

Habermas does not stop with a model for societal interaction. He additionally constructs a theory of communicative competence designed for understanding the interests of society embedded in language, which he defines as "the specific medium of understanding at the sociocultural stage of evolution. . . ." (Habermas 1) Habermas employs speech-act theory as the foundation for three levels of research and understanding. The first level is universal pragmatics or a general theory. At this level Habermas describes the basic assumptions behind universal pragmatics and three types of speech acts. Then he claims that "every competent speaker has in principle the possibility of unequivocally selecting one mode because with every speech act he must raise three universal validity claims, so that he can single out one of them to thematize a component of speech" (59).

Validity claims is the second level of Habermas' model. At this level he connects speech acts to rationality by demonstrating how each speech act is related to a different validity claim. In his analysis Habermas discusses five levels of communication--communicative action, theoretic discourse, practical discourse, meta-theoretical discourse, and meta-ethical discourse--and establishes the appropriate validity claim for each level. Habermas makes it clear he is discussing the "ideal speech situation" which he then acknowledges will rarely be achieved (Foss 258-61).

The third level that interacts with those below is communicative action, which he defines as "the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations . . . and seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action

in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement." At this point, Habermas adds three dimensions to his model: (1) domains of reality; (2) functions of speech; and (3) attitude of speaker (Foss 262). For Habermas, communicative action, like speech acts and the ideal speech situation, is not a practical occurrence but truly an ideal.

Habermas extends his model with his theory of communicative competence however. He develops a critical theory as well. Habermas does this by discussing the life-world as he transcends the level of individual human actions to explain rationality at the level of social institutions. Even though Habermas is still concerned with "rationality," his movement toward poetic humanism becomes evident. Foss, Foss, and Trapp indicate, "For Habermas, an emancipated society is one in which the life-world is not subjected to the demands of system maintenance but rather one in which the mechanisms of the system are accommodated to the needs of the individual (266)" Habermas definitely sees modern society as a paradox with increased differentiation and rationalization but also with "communicative action as a means of dealing with human problems" (266). His complex, rational model of communicative competence and his analysis of critical theory can definitely contribute to a rhetoric of poetic humanism.

Michel Foucault is the final European philosopher to be examined. His interest in rhetoric developed from the study of psychology when he discovered that the conventional scientific approach to subjects such as mental illness, penal institutions, and sexuality was in his view counter-productive. His studies placed rhetoric, power, and the construction of knowledge at the heart of these issues.

Foucault's central rhetorical concept was episteme, which he later replaced with discursive formations. He defined episteme as "the total set

of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, science, and possibly formalized systems." He adds that "it is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities" (Foucault, Archaeology 191). Foucault then identifies the episteme or pattern of thought for three periods in history. The Renaissance, the 16th century, was based on resemblance or similitude (Foucault, Order 17-25). For the Classical age, 17th and 18th centuries, representation was the form of episteme (43). In the Modern period, late 18th and 19th centuries, literature or language was the episteme because as Foucault states, "(it is) at the very centre of what Western culture has overlain" (43). Foucault then argues that because language is now the key to understanding human activity, we are entering a new period where language analysis itself overshadows the human being (xiv).

With language as the key to human activity, Foucault is concerned about the different categories of rules that govern its use. He discusses rules that control what can be talked about, who can speak and write, and what is accepted as knowledge (Foss 218-20). His analysis of these rules is very inductive, so he does not provide a list of specific categories but suggests broad areas where rules govern people's use of language.

Foucault's interest in knowledge and discourse brought him to the study of power and ethics when he realized they could not be separated. His method for investigating discursive formations he initially called "arachaeology" and later "genaeology." This method was based on a number of principles. One should (1) study common, unknown documents that reveal "the regularity of a discursive practice" and "the techniques of power that reside . . . in local, regional, and material institutions"; (2)

analyze discourse descriptively and transcriptively more than interpretively "to discover the boundaries of acceptability for truth claims"; (3) start analysis at the micro-level to provide "the means for an ascending analysis of power"; (4) pay attention to contradiction, disparity, and difference as well as commonality and coherent patterns in discourse; (5) not connect the discourse with the individual who created it because the role the individual plays and the rules that govern the use of discourse are primary (Foss 230-1). Foucault's method is designed "to enter the interior of discourse in order to determine the rules that govern it and to describe the various relations among statements in a discursive formation" (Foss 229). It is important to realize that the goal of his "archaeology/genaeology" is understanding, not interpretation:

> (It) is not supposed to carry any suggestion of anticipation; it simply indicates a possible line of attack for the analysis of verbal performances: the specification of a level--that of the statement and the archive; the determination and illumination of a domain--the enunciative regularities, the positivities; the application of such concepts as rules of formation, archaeological derivation, and historical a priori. (Foucault, Archaeology 206)

Foucault identifies interpretation with criticism and ideology, so he tries to avoid them. Yet, because he understands that knowledge and power can't completely be separated, he advocates a more creative and positive view of power.

From this overview of Foucault's approach, it should be clear that discursive formations are central to all knowledge and power in society, thus providing rhetoric a central role in daily activity. The complex and

subjective nature of Foucault's archaeological method makes it more consistent with the orientation of poetic humanism than science.

Rhetoric Characteristics of Poetic Humanism

Contemporary European philosophers like Grassi, Habermas, and Foucault, who have separated themselves from the scientific orientation, can provide a theoretical foundation for a rhetoric of poetic humanism. To demonstrate this, I would now like to organize some of their ideas according to the characteristics of poetic humanism introduced earlier--humanistic, poetic, subjective, and pluralistic.

Ernesto Grassi, who presents himself as a humanist, captures the essence of this rhetoric with his concepts of "ingenium" and "metaphor." Ingenium stresses the importance of the individual's "grasping" in the process of "the transfer of meaning from the sensory world to a higher human one" (Foss 151). Grassi then ties metaphor to individual "human cognition" in contrast to "formal theories of language" as he argues that "we must understand the humanistic view" of language (Grassi 98-9).

The poetic dimension of rhetoric is not only reflected in Grassi's treatment of metaphor, but can be found in Michel Foucault's central concept, "episteme," defined as the total set of relations that unite the discursive practices of a given period. He indicates that the episteme for the Modern period is literature or language, which is "at the very centre of what Western culture has overlain" (Foucault Order 43). Foucault's use of the term "overlain" emphasizes his view of an interacting, process nature of language rather than a representational, scientific one.

The subjective nature of poetic humanism can be seen in Jurgen Habermas' approach to "meaning." He ties meaning to the individual when

he explains, "Social action depends on the agent's 'definition of the situation.'" Yet, he does not ignore the person's relationship to society when he says, "The meanings to which social action is oriented are primarily intersubjective meanings constitutive of the sociocultural matrix in which individuals find themselves and act. . ." (Habermas xi).

Pluralism, the final characteristic of poetic humanism that will be discussed here, is suggested by all three scholars due to their emphasis upon the individual's rhetoric. However, Habermas relates the issue directly to modern society. Foss, Foss, and Trapp describe his position:

> Modernity, on the other hand, is characterized by the differentiation of society into the objective, social, and subjective spheres, which allows for a greater diversity of response to the various dimensions of society. The realization that different world views exist, then, is a dominant feature of modern societies. (265)

This paper is just a first step in initiating a rhetoric of poetic humanism, but it suggests that such a philosophy is emerging today. After Kenneth Burke predicted that the orientation of poetic humanism would replace science, he also indicated that previous patterns of thought that had been transcended would continue to survive within the new orientation. So even though I believe the challenge of the 21st century is the implementation of poetic humanism, we will always see vestiges of magic and religion in what portends to be a long struggle between science and poetic humanism for dominance as the pattern of thought for society.

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